
Murie Science and Learning Center Management Plan

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Denali National Park and Preserve

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mission and Goals

The mission of the Murie Science and Learning Center (MSLC) is to promote science and stewardship on behalf of national parks in northern Alaska. The MSLC is part of a national effort to increase scientific literacy by showcasing research from living laboratories like Denali National Park and Preserve. Specific goals include:

- Engage the public with park science through interactive learning and research programs.
- Enhance the public's understanding of how parks use science to make management decisions.
- Share scientific findings in timely, compelling, and understandable ways.
- Use partnerships to enhance outreach offerings.

Though located in Denali National Park and Preserve (DENA), MSLC is a collaborative effort between Denali, seven other northern Alaska national parks, and numerous park partners. MSLC is run by DENA in collaboration with a Managing Partner and other partner organizations.

History

The Murie Science and Learning Center is one of 19 Research Learning Centers initiated through the National Park Service's Natural Resource Challenge in 2000. The goal of the Challenge was to promote more and better science in our national parks, to use scientific findings to make sound management decisions, and to share what is learned about these natural areas more effectively

with the public. MSLC came into existence as an organizational concept in 2003, and moved into its present facilities in 2005.

Facilities

MSLC facilities include a main building, a shared dining facility, a front-country 3-bedroom yurt, and a remote field camp located at Mile 30 of the park road featuring six tent cabins (sleeps 24 total), a food storage facility, and a yurt. The main building contains an exhibit area for year-round visitors, a large, dividable classroom with video-teleconferencing equipment and a wireless guest network, a conference room, and office space capable of hosting a blend of 15 partners, science educators, researchers, and administrators.

II. OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT

Advisory Committee

Denali National Park and Preserve is responsible for overseeing MSLC, including approving programs, forging partnerships, and controlling financial decisions. The DENA Superintendent has ultimate decision-making authority over MSLC, but relies on input from the Murie Advisory Committee for most high-level matters. The Advisory Committee is comprised of the DENA Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Chief of Interpretation, Chief of External Affairs, Chief of Resources, and NPS Director for MSLC. In instances where there is not a conflict of interest, the Managing Partner organization's Executive Director and MSLC Program Director also serve as members of the Advisory Committee.

Managing Partner

MSLC primarily functions as a public-private partnership between NPS and a non-profit Managing Partner. The Managing Partner is selected every five years by the NPS members of the MSLC Advisory Committee. Privileges associated with serving as the Managing Partner include use of MSLC office space and facilities, access to park resources for approved programs, and the inclusion of the organizational name on some MSLC program materials. To be selected and to serve as the Managing Partner, an organization must demonstrate that it has the capacity to meet the following criteria:

- Conduct ten or more varieties of nationally-recognized free and fee-based science outreach programs for youth and adults in Denali and other northern Alaska parks each year. Programs must meet diverse audience needs by ranging in length from hour-long to multi-day, and by being targeted to specific audiences including Alaskans, non-Alaskan visitors, and park and park-partner employees.
- Provide a gross revenue stream that is appropriately scaled to the opportunity as agreed upon in annual budget meetings, to be used for MSLC operations. Ensure that annual net revenues always exceed annual Managing Partner operating costs. Commit 100% of gross revenues from all fee-based programs towards NPS-approved MSLC programs, functions and facilities. No revenue may be committed to shareholders, individuals, or operations that fall outside of the purview of MSLC.

- Designate a year-round, on-site Program Director to oversee the organization's activities, operations and finances. Hire appropriate staff and procure appropriate equipment, furnishings and supplies in support of MSLC activities.
- Manage MSLC Managing Partner income and expenses in a transparent accounting system that is distinct from the parent organization's accounts. Provide balance and transaction reports to the DENA Superintendent and his/her designees for annual budget approval and upon request. During the budget approval process, the expense budget will be examined for efficiency and productive use of MSLC funds for the mission of MSLC and facility operations.
- In cooperation with NPS, actively market programs to appropriate audiences using appropriate media (print, electronic, etc.).
- Maintain insurance coverage for all Managing Partner programs at levels that meet or exceed NPS minimal requirements for partnership agreements.
- Abide by all state and federal laws, including state employment laws regarding contract workers, as well as Denali National Park and Preserve policies.
- Provide full-time staffing for the MSLC information desk while the Denali Visitor Center is open (approximately May 15 – September 15).
- Make available and manage, in cooperation with the Cooperating Association, appropriate interpretive materials for public sale while the MSLC serves as the Winter Visitor Center at minimum and potentially year-round.
- Abide by all other components of the MSLC Management Plan.

A review of whether the Managing Partner criteria are being met occurs annually in conjunction with the MSLC budget review process. If criteria are not being met, the DENA Superintendent or his/her designee may determine a plan for the Managing Partner to come into compliance. Either partner may terminate the agreement if compliance has not been met by the agreed-upon deadline.

Other MSLC Partners

NPS forges partnerships with other individuals and organizations for the purpose of serving the MSLC mission in capacities that complement programs and services already provided by NPS or the Managing Partner. See Section III for specifics on how these partnerships are formed and managed.

Management Team

NPS designates a Director to represent NPS interests in and authority over MSLC. The Managing Partner likewise designates a Program Director to represent its organization at MSLC. Both individuals work on site and are integral to MSLC operations. Together these two individuals comprise the Management Team, which makes most day-to-day operational decisions on behalf of MSLC. Generally speaking, day-to-day operations include everything but annual program and budget approvals and major partnership decisions.

Business Plans

MSLC is guided by a business plan model comprised of a Strategic Plan, a Management Plan and Operating Procedures (Table 1). The Strategic Plan (to be developed) provides long-term vision and goals for MSLC. The Management Plan defines roles and responsibilities for DENA,

the MSLC Managing Partner, and other MSLC partners, and outlines the overarching structure of MSLC operations. Operating Procedures provide details for the safe, professional and consistent operations of MSLC facilities.

Table 1: MSLC business plan model

Strategic Plan	Management Plan	Operating Procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational mission, vision, goals, objectives for next 5 – 10 years. Revised every five years upon selection of the Managing Partner, with targeted input from partner parks and organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives, standards, guidelines, key roles and responsibilities, business structure. Revised by DENA with input from Managing Partner when significant modifications needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front Desk SOP Field Camp SOP MSLC Facilities: space booking protocols and fees Revised by DENA and Managing Partner annually and as needed.

III. PROGRAMMING BY MANAGING PARTNER AND OTHER MSLC PARTNERS

Managing Partner Program Development and Approval

The Managing Partner develops fee-based and free programs in consultation with NPS resource and education staff. MSLC mission and goals are chief considerations when designing programs.

The Managing Partner Program Director drafts an annual program proposal with consultation from the NPS MSLC Director (Table 2). Final approval of these programs is granted annually by the Superintendent or his/her designee. To insure consistency in MSLC programs and relevancy to the MSLC mission, NPS makes its staff available to the Managing Partner for program development consultation to the greatest extent practicable.

Programming by other MSLC Partners

NPS can forge MSLC partnerships with individuals or organizations other than the Managing Partner when the partnership program serves the MSLC mission and does not duplicate programs offered by or impede operational efficiencies of NPS or the Managing Partner. Prospective partner organizations may bring program proposals to the Murie Advisory Committee for consideration at any time. The Advisory Committee uses the Murie Partnership Program Decision Tree (Table 2) to determine whether to approve the request.

Table 2: Murie Partnership Program Decision Tree

- 1) Does the partnership program fulfill the Murie mission?
 - a) Yes: Move to 2.
 - b) No: Not a Murie partnership opportunity. Potential partner may seek Commercial Use Authorization or similar contract with NPS Commercial Services Office.
- 2) Does the partnership program duplicate a program or capacity already filled by Managing Partner or NPS Education operations?

- a) Yes: Individual or organization can request to partner with Managing Partner or NPS Education in offering the program. Financial/credit benefits will be shared among partners.
- b) No: Move to 3.
- 3) Does the partnership program generate profits (gross revenues exceed net revenues)?
 - a) Yes: NPS MSLC Director brings the proposal to the MSLC Advisory Committee for consideration. If the proposal is approved, the NPS MSLC Director develops a formal Partnership Program Agreement that is reviewed and renewed annually by Superintendent or his/her designee.
 - b) No: Managing Partner and NPS may agree to assist in offering the partner program as capacity allows. An official NPS Partnership Program Agreement may or may not be needed.

Program Evaluation

All MSLC partners are responsible for evaluating their own programs for quality, consistency, and efficacy using their organization's educational standards. NPS also evaluates all MSLC programs annually using current Denali Interpretation program evaluation standards. MSLC partner staff are invited to participate in NPS coaching and training programs.

IV. KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To reduce redundancies, make best use of staff expertise, and facilitate the bi-annual changing of facility functions, key roles for NPS and the Managing Partner have been designated (Table 3).

Table 3: Key MSLC roles and responsibilities

Program Area or Task	Lead Organization
Finances	
Managing Partner Fund Allocation and Management	MP & NPS
NPS Fund Sources	NPS
Additional Funding (grants, etc)	Assigned as needed
Facility Operations	
Front-Country Facilities	NPS
Winter Front Desk Operations	NPS
Summer Front Desk Operations	MP
Sales Area	Cooperating Association
Field Camp and Yurt	MP
Library	MP
MSLC Website	MP & NPS
Facility Calendar	MP & NPS
Exhibit Area	NPS
Offices	NPS
Bulletin Boards	NPS
NPS Cisco IP Phones	NPS

Liaison to NPS Maintenance	NPS
Programs	
Partner Program Approvals	MP & NPS
Multi-Day Field Courses	MP & NPS
Teacher Trainings & Scholarships	MP & NPS
NPS Volunteers	NPS
Research and Partner Park Grants	MP & NPS
Virtual and In-school Curricula	NPS
Junior Ranger & Discovery Pack	NPS
Visiting Group Services	MP & NPS
Annual Report Compilations	MP & NPS
Program Evaluations	NPS & Partners
Partnerships	
Liaison to Partners	MP & NPS
Liaison to Concessionaire	MP & NPS

Note: MP = Managing Partner

Staff Activities Outside of MSLC Program Areas

It is assumed that NPS and Managing Partner staff at MSLC may have duties not directly related to MSLC (e.g. organizational strategic plans, hiring committees, within-organization consultation). These duties should constitute no more than 10% of any individual staff person's time for either organization.

Meetings/Communications

Communication within the Management Team takes place regularly (weekly to monthly on average). During these meetings, the NPS MSLC Director is the proxy for the DENA Superintendent and is responsible for keeping the Superintendent's office informed if warranted. Direct communications between the Management Team and the Advisory Committee occur as needed (twice yearly at minimum).

V. BUDGET AND FINANCES

Managing Partner Revenue, Budgeting and Accounting

The Managing Partner retains all revenue from MSLC fee-based programs, donations, and sales of specified revenue-generating products in a designated account. Financial statements are maintained in a transparent, pre-agreed format. These funds are accounted for separately from the Managing Partner organization's other financial accounts. Separate subaccounts for specific grants are created as needed.

A year-end financial report that includes all Managing Partner-related programs and expenses is generated by the Managing Partner Program Director by November every year (Table 4). Likewise the Management Team drafts an annual budget proposal for coming-year MSLC

Managing Partner funds by November each year. This budget includes Managing Partner operating costs and priorities for education, exhibits, grants, and infrastructure support. The MSLC mission and goals are chief considerations when allocating funds.

Table 4: Ideal timeframes for MSLC Managing Partner programming, budgeting, and reporting. Sup = DENA Superintendent’s representative; MP = Managing Partner

Remit entrance fee monies to NPS:	Monthly
MP season-end summaries to NPS to inform year-end and project completion reports:	November 1
MSLC year-end budget summary to Sup for review:	November 15
MSLC coming-year budget proposal to Sup for review:	November 15
MP program proposal to Sup for review:	November 15
MSLC coming-year budget and programs approved by Sup:	December 31
MP MSLC budget finalized:	February 1

Both the season-end financial report and the budget proposal are reviewed during a meeting between the DENA Superintendent or his/her designee and the MSLC Management Team during a November budget meeting (Table 4). Final approval of the following year’s budget is provided by the DENA Superintendent or his/her designee, with input from the Managing Partner’s Executive Director.

Proceeds from other Partnership Programs

Financial arrangements between NPS and other MSLC partners are specified within the General and Cooperative Agreements and Program Proposals particular to those partnership programs.

Procurement of Additional Funds

NPS and the Managing Partner may identify projects and specific needs that require additional funding (e.g., field camp development, joint research/education projects, distance education programs, a residential facility at park entrance area, etc.). NPS seeks to enhance educational funding through the federal appropriations process, pursuit of grants, and/or by educating the public about gift acceptance authority and NPS needs through “wish lists” or other authorized means. The Managing Partner administers grants, as necessary, in accordance with MSLC objectives. Any fundraising efforts undertaken by the Managing Partner expressly for the benefit of MSLC are in accordance with NPS Director’s Order 21.

Entrance Fees

All MSLC partners collect and remit entrance fees for all fee-based MSLC programs. Groups with valid education fee waivers and individuals possessing a valid park pass, who are under the age of 16, or who have paid an entrance fee within the last seven days, are exempt from this fee collection.

VI. ETHICS

Due to the very close working relationship between NPS and the Managing Partner in particular, and all MSLC partners in general, and the ambiguity as to which organization MSLC staff

persons serve, it is the professional responsibility of the MSLC Management Team to ensure the highest standards of ethics are followed in the service of public trust¹. United States Government Executive Orders 12674 and 12731 state 14 general principles that broadly define the obligations of public service. Underlying these 14 principles are four core concepts:

1. Employees shall not use public office for private gain
2. Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
3. Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.

In addition, MSLC employees, as well as employees of partner organizations conducting MSLC programs, must strive to avoid any action that would create the appearance that they are violating United States Government laws or ethical standards. By observing these general principles, and specific ethics standards, employees help to ensure that citizens have confidence in the integrity of Government operations and the Managing Partner organization.

VII. NAME USAGE AND PROGRAM PROMOTION

While the MSLC is a powerful organizational concept, the partners functioning under the MSLC umbrella will generally be the entities with which the public identifies, rather than the MSLC itself. To this end, it is appropriate that MSLC programs are primarily affiliated with the names and logos of the partners involved. Some specific ways in which credit and organizational affiliation should be designated include:

- NPS staff conducting MSLC programs wear the NPS uniform and arrowhead badge. Likewise partner staff wear the uniform and logo of their organizations while conducting MSLC programs.
- All programs functioning under the MSLC umbrella are identified as MSLC partnership programs in printed and web-based written materials and in orally-presented program introductions and credits. Likewise, programs funded by MSLC give credit to MSLC and all contributing partners in written materials and program introductions/credits. When multiple partner organizations are involved, all organizations that have provided direct financial support are recognized by name and logo in addition to MSLC.
- The MSLC logo is used on all written MSLC program materials, MSLC facility structures, and the MSLC website.

MSLC partners can use the NPS Arrowhead symbol and other approved NPS logos to promote MSLC partnership programs and activities in accordance with Director's Order #52D and with permission of the Superintendent. The Arrowhead may not be used in association with fundraising activities.

¹Refer to "United States Office of Government Ethics" (www.usoge.gov), and "Executive Orders 11222, 12674, and 12731: Prescribing Standards of Ethical Conduct for Government Officers and Employees."

An MSLC website is maintained by the NPS MSLC Director with input from the Managing Partner Program Director. Compliance with RCL and NPS visual and content standards is sought for all content.

VIII. FACILITY AND EQUIPMENT PROTOCOLS

Facility Operations and Fees

The Management Team maintains schedules for the MSLC field camp, yurt, dining hall, classrooms, and conference room. Bookings and use of these facilities use the following priority scale:

1. MSLC education and research activities
2. Other education, research, and NPS or partner training activities
3. Non-education groups (with approval of the MSLC Management Team)

Requests that do not fall into set/established categories are brought to the attention of the MSLC Management Team.

The Managing Partner coordinates the financial contracting of all MSLC programs taking place in MSLC facilities (classroom/dining/field camp) and includes appropriate coordination fees. With assistance from NPS and the Concessionaire responsible for the Murie Dining Hall, the Managing Partner manages a menu of options and fees associated with facility use. Non-fee or partner-coordinated usages are managed on a self-serve basis unless otherwise delegated.

The Management Team co-manages the MSLC Front Desk SOP, updating it as needed tandem with staffing cycles. NPS defines the season for the Managing Partner front desk staff, and determine duties and business hours in collaboration with the Managing Partner Program Director.

Facility Access

Only NPS staff, Managing Partner MSLC staff, official NPS volunteers, and official visiting researchers, presenters, and school groups are given keys to MSLC facilities. Background checks are required for all permanent and seasonal MSLC staff, including official volunteers.

Equipment and Information Technology

The Management Team seeks shared, efficient use of common resources, including storage space, recognizing the primary purposes of said resources. It is the Managing Partner's responsibility to provide the equipment, Information Technology, and communications necessary for their operation. However, NPS may assist with providing these items and services on a case-by-case basis.

Established NPS protocols for equipment ownership and transfer of equipment between organizations are followed. Property used primarily for Managing Partner programs is retained as that organization's property until it is no longer needed.

MSLC equipment, regardless of ownership, is not available for personal use by any individuals unless permitted by the MSLC Management Team. All employees and guests are informed to use discretion, keeping bandwidth in mind, when using the internet for personal reasons during non-work time.

Sales Area

The DENA Cooperating Association maintains a sales area in the MSLC main building to sell interpretive materials. Products sold are educational and/or scientific in nature, or MSLC logo products. NPS assists the Cooperating Association in the development of educational and science-related sales materials or approved logo products. MSLC front desk staff conduct sales on behalf of the Cooperating Association year-round.

IX. PARK USAGE PROTOCOLS

MSLC Field Camp

The MSLC Field Camp is owned by NPS but managed by the Managing Partner and used in accordance with an operations manual updated and approved by NPS as needed. The Field Camp operations manual is included as part of the compilation of Operating Procedures for the entire MSLC.

Transportation

NPS and the Managing Partner conduct all transportation operations within DENA in accordance with existing park regulations and state and federal laws. Both organizations seek to use Concessions services when appropriate.

NPS allocates road permits annually to support MSLC activities in accordance with the Vehicle Management Plan. The Managing Partner coordinates use of available road permits in support of MSLC activities in consultation with and as approved by NPS.

Backcountry Usage

All MSLC programs function in accordance with the Backcountry Management Plan and maintain highest standards of Leave No Trace. Hiking routes used for all MSLC programs are reported according to park-designated protocols. Research-related MSLC activities that are not permitted under the MSLC Categorical Exclusion must go through the park research permitting system.

Risk Management

To protect all participants and partner organizations involved in the MSLC consortium, all MSLC partners maintain safety and risk management practices that meet or exceed industry standards for remote education activities. In some instances there may be differences in the permissible practices existing between organizations. In this case the organization that collects fees and/or would be considered as the lead responsible party by a reasonable jury holds the liability and has the ultimate authority on the practices allowed.

All MSLC partners must conform to the following risk management practices:

- All partners must have Risk Management Plans that meet industry standards. These plans are reviewed by NPS on an annual basis.
- Staff training and field practices regarding emergency response are revised based on regular advisement from the DENA Communications Center. Partners and NPS annually review and confirm the collaboration of emergency response practices for each organization.
- Per DOI policy, partner organizations are prohibited from seeking 'risk release' signatures from participants. However, these organizations are encouraged to have participants sign an acknowledgement of risk form (participant agreement).

X. AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE



11/26/14

Don Striker

Date

Superintendent, Denali National Park and Preserve